



Articles & Features

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MVAMC Decontamination Team Annual Training Exercise Ensures Medical Center Capable of Emergency Response

By Kevin L. McIver — Public Affairs Officer

MARTINSBURG, W.Va. — The Martinsburg VA Medical Center conducted its annual Decontamination Team training here today to ensure first responders remain prepared for any chemical, biological or radiological incident that might occur.

"This was an excellent opportunity to practice decontamination procedures in the event of a real-world emergency," said Medical Center Director Ann R. Brown.

Air Force Junior ROTC cadets from Berkeley County schools served as patients during the exercise that included a wet decontamination wash down by the team clad in full HAZMAT (hazardous materials) suits and respiratory gear.

"It is very important to have personnel trained as first responders and the team members are to be commended for their willingness to serve," said MVAMC Acting Safety Manager Todd Lake. "It takes a strong commitment of volunteerism to complete eight hours of annual training and to participate in two drills a year outside of their normal job."

Team leader Scott Sanders recognized the value of having a capable team here at the Medical Center. "The team organized following 9/11, and we have to be prepared to respond to many different types of incidents as part of our mission that includes providing support during civilian emergencies," said Sanders.

A unique aspect of the team is it is comprised of staff volunteers.

"We have great representation from across the Medical Center, including doctors, nurses, safety, administrative, and many others who serve on the team," said Sanders.



Martinsburg VA Medical Center Decontamination Team members assisting a patient during the training exercise held April 22, 2010. Photo: VA/Kevin McIver

Overall, maintaining the skills and resources necessary to carry out decontamination procedures is critical to the Medical Center's mission—and today's exercise was deemed a success by staff, cadets and evaluators. "It was one of the best drills I've ever seen," said West Virginia Hospital Association HAZMAT instructor Bill Ellis.

"It was fun, but it was also important to support VA as they provide such great care for our Veterans," said Cadet Alex Brown.

MVAMC Decontamination Team Annual Training Exercise

Photos: VA/Cali Coulthard



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